

The '*Death of the Subject*' explained

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(Preface and 2 Chapters of Part One only)

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Preface

Who is the Subject?

The freely willing human Subject is the cornerstone of contemporary society. Every aspect of our civilisation takes the free Subject as its basic assumption.

In Britain in April 1999 27 million men and women had entered into a contract with an employer; in 1997 just over half of the adult population had entered into a contract of marriage; 16 million homes were privately owned, the rest of the 20 million homes rented. In 1998 goods and services to the value of £843.7 billion were sold; in 1998 nearly 20 million cars are privately owned and in 1997 private motorised road transport accounted for 616 billion kilometres travelled, while a further 85 billion kilometres were covered in buses, coaches and by rail; in May 1997 30.5 million people voted in a general election followed by 26.8 million in June 2001.¹

In each and every single one of these billions of relationships, the principle is that these millions of people are constituted as freely willing Subjects. To undertake a job of work for pay, to marry, to buy and sell, to drive on the roads and to vote in

the election each person is cast as a Subject. As a Subject, one assumes responsibilities and expects rewards. But most pointedly as a Subject, one expects to decide for one's self exactly what one is – or is not – prepared to do. Voluntarism is the guiding principle. Coercion – whether in slavery, forced marriage, economic monopoly, arbitrary policing or the suspension of democratic representation - is reviled as an evil. Of course nobody believes that freedom means that whatever you think ought to happen will happen. Recognising ourselves as free Subjects we recognise others as free Subjects, with their own goals.² Meeting the resistance of others does not mean that freedom is nullified. It only means that one must engage the agreement of others to advance one's own ends.³

Even those coercive powers that are acceptable, on the grounds that they defend our liberties, the state's powers of taxation, requisition, detention and imprisonment, are heavily qualified with safeguards. Where these are breached, as in the infamous 'miscarriage of justice' cases in Britain in the 1980s, the reverberations are profound. The coercive power of the state derives in principle from a higher voluntarism. Only the higher aggregation of the collective will derived ultimately from parliament may override the rights of individual property as in taxation or compulsory purchase.⁴ So, too, do the exceptional powers of the police derive their authority from elected government. Where individuals are denied their freedom, the argument goes, they are held to an implied contract with society to uphold the laws of the land.

The freely willing Subject is the presupposition that makes all of these relationships possible. Without engaging the voluntary actions of the vast majority of its citizens, society would collapse. If just a fraction of the billions of freely willed obligations taken on by these millions of Subjects were not honoured, the effects would be disastrous. Jobs would be left undone, products unsold, shops empty or looted, children abandoned, cars crashed, government exposed as a sham. Since all turns on the axle of the autonomous Subject, if that axle breaks, the finely balanced wheels of all these social relations would break free, clashing and grating against each other like the gears of a broken engine. Both actively and negatively, society needs to engage the passions and ambitions of its members in their own, freely willed activity. Those political regimes that have sought to crush freedom and supplant the democratic will have been marked not just by violent repression, but, perhaps more appallingly, by a slow degeneration, as the population withdraws consent, turns inward, refuses to engage and ceases to produce.⁵ Subjectivity is not an optional extra. It is the basis upon which contemporary society reproduces itself. No regime, no matter how efficient, could hope to substitute its own planning for the myriad decisions and choices – individual and collective – of its citizens.

The integrity, sustenance and growth of contemporary society depend upon subjectivity as its foundation and principle. The principles of a free society, of

democracy and the rule of law are universally embraced by all serious commentators. There are precious few who will actively and vocally embrace a programme of repression and dictatorship. Even those marginal organisations of the far right must pay lip-service to the principles of freedom, however perversely, in the guise of 'Rights for whites'⁶.

This Subject then is the foundation of society and, say Hobbes, Locke and Rousseau, he has been around as long Man has. For the great humanist thinkers of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries society was the creation of individual Subjects. For them, we are all naturally individuals, with appetites and fancies, and a natural liberty. If we trade our natural liberty for civil rights, it is because we can, being already free Subjects. The Subject is a man of action. He challenges, he contests, he defeats. Resistance is an obstacle to be overcome by him, and failure a disgrace, still more so acquiescence which threatens to destroy him altogether. The Subject is also thoughtful and reflective. 'Our Glassy Essence', the inner life of thought and conscience is divided from the outer world in the Subject. The Subject withdraws from the world into his own thoughts, to consider and plan what he ought to do. The Subject works. Work is not a shame to him, but a source of pride. Hard work endured is like a hero's quest to him, or a battle; he comes home exhausted, but glad. Making things is the best (though he might hesitate to call it anything so expressive as *creativity*). The Subject's relationship to nature is double-edged. He is a natural man, but he aims to master nature. He is fascinated by nature, and tortures her to make her surrender her secrets.⁷ He masters nature to make her yield up her fruits. Nature is his domain. The Subject is perhaps most importantly the bearer of rights. Liberty is his watchword. Against the Church and the King he asserted his own right to determine his future. The individual's freedom of conscience,⁸ speech,⁹ association,¹⁰ from arbitrary arrest¹¹ and of private property¹² were all asserted by the Subject. With such freedoms the Subject built our own civilisation.

The Subject is political, understandably seeing himself reflected in those ancient political animals of Athens. But this also implies that the Subject may be a collective Subject, as well as an individual. A people is the collective Subject of a national epic, as well as party to a contract, as in the opening line of the Constitution of the United States of America: 'We, the people of the United States....' Other collective Subjects include, notably, corporations, which, whilst having a bad press lately, are quite pointedly recognised as legal Subjects, with rights and obligations, and, though less in evidence than before, trades unions, whose demand for 'free collective bargaining' was attacked in the 1980s. There are still others, such as juries, (whose decisions are not to be disarticulated into separate opinions by investigation), or families.

In the second half of the twentieth century, the political opposition of left and right generally found each side pressing one version of Subjective freedom. For the right individual rights took precedence over democracy, while for the left, collective decisions carried more weight than any one man's selfish interests. These political oppositions were theorised by 'Cold War liberals' like Isaiah Berlin on the one hand¹³, and 'collectivists' like CB Macpherson on the other.¹⁴ But the separation and counter position of the individual and collective Subjects is a modern trend. In treating the two as only relatively opposed, but essentially similar, I follow the earlier orthodoxy established by Hegel, in his *Philosophy of Right* (where an undifferentiated 'Will' is the basic building block out of which all right is made), or Rousseau in his *Social Contract*. Of course, the general will can and does contradict the individual, as with taxation or imprisonment. Similarly, the individual will can (and must) dissent from the collective. But these are relative oppositions. In truth, both are mutually dependent principles. A collective that was not made up of freely willing individuals would be incapable of deliberative decision making. An individual who was outside of all society would, as Rousseau understood, have a natural liberty but no civil rights.

Contemporary critics of the Enlightenment are not so impressed by the claims of the Subject. They doubt that society depends upon him and reckon he has only been around as long as Hobbes, Locke and Rousseau. The great error of the Enlightenment was to take its own eighteenth century bourgeois citizen as the model for all people in all time, as though the Iroquois lived only to open a shop. Today, there is a powerful question mark over the Subject, that central character of the free society. The doubts over the possibilities of free subjectivity are the subject-matter of this book. The doubt is that everyone is paying lip-service to the idea of a free Subject, not just the far right. Imagine that the principles of freedom, of civil and political rights, of contracts and promises were being observed, not honestly or with conviction. Instead, consider the possibility that these are observed rather in the manner of routine etiquette or ritual – a ritual that has lost its meaning, but persists out of force of habit and the lack of an obvious alternative. The words 'freedom', 'liberty' and 'rights' spring readily to the lips. But they are worn thin. Politicians and salesmen are too willing to turn these ringing words into advertising slogans and soundbites. In 1994 opponents of British government's proposed Criminal Justice Act took to the streets to protest its repressive agenda. But at the moment when their cause had the nobility of the People's Charter or Women's Suffrage, the campaigners were gripped by an ironic self-deflation, shown by the adoption of the slogan 'Fight for the right to party'. It is as if it was just too gauche to stand up for civil liberties without a knowing wink to the audience.

Martin Amis' hapless author Richard Tull proposes a *History of Increasing Humiliation*: 'it would be a book accounting for the decline in the status and virtue of literary protagonists. First gods, then demi-gods, then kings and great warriors,

great lovers, then burghers and merchants and vicars and doctors and lawyers. Then social realism: you. Then irony: me. Then maniacs and murderers, tramps, mobs, rabble, flotsam, vermin.’¹⁵ Amis is describing the way that the human Subject has travelled from the periphery to the centre, only then to be *de-centred*. If the emergence of the nineteenth-century novel’s hero corresponds to the emergence of a human Subject, then the modern age is one in which the Subject is losing its centrality. Increasingly, it seems, the literary protagonist is other people, people who are alien to us, ‘maniacs and murderers, tramps, mobs, rabble, flotsam, vermin’.

What if the free subjectivity at the core of our social order is all used up? In the past repressive regimes sent tanks to put down a rebellious people. The complex paraphernalia of intimidating policing - rounding up the ringleaders, spies and informants, making an example of troublemakers, censorship and dirty-tricks - is all designed to deal with people who are determined to be free. Their own struggle informs the specific character of their repression.

The late Jean Baudrillard proposes a witty reversal of the model of repression and resistance in his little book *In the Shadow of the Silent Majorities*. There he imagines that the indifference of the masses, rather than any rebelliousness, is their most potent force. ‘One begins to foresee...that withdrawing into the private could well be a direct defiance of the political, a form of actively resisting political manipulation.’¹⁶ This mass, is, according to Baudrillard, ‘an opaque nebula whose growing density absorbs all the surrounding energy and light rays to collapse finally under its own weight. A black hole which engulfs the social’. The increasingly feverish attempts to articulate the masses’ ambitions and desires, whether politically or in marketing slogans, meets only with a powerfully subversive indifference.

Baudrillard’s fantasy is not accurate. It is itself a fatally doomed and ironical attempt to articulate the outlook of the Silent Majority, as if it were a strategy, which of course it never could be. But it does indicate something of what a society in which had lost its conviction in free subjectivity would look like. Such a society would be in danger of collapse having had its cornerstone chiselled away. As long as there was no movement, the structure would stand, but attempts at repair would only expose the fault and accelerate the collapse. The whole edifice of our society is built upon this cornerstone of the freely willing Subject. The families, homes, working lives, transportation, orderliness, lawful behaviour, political representation takes as its starting point that elusive character, the Subject.

Perhaps the real danger to liberty today comes not from the expected quarter of the forces of direct repression, but from within. If the rights-bearing Subject is but a shadow of his former self, then who will be the bearer of rights? A recent collection of essays asked the question, ‘What comes after the Subject?’¹⁷ Overwhelmingly

the contributors replied, not with an alternative, but with a deconstruction of the question itself. Why should there be a 'what' they said, rightly intuiting that the form of the question implies another Subject.

As we shall see, the Subject is under attack. In words and deeds, the role of subjectivity is being questioned. The sovereign individual is being knocked from his perch. Maybe he deserves it: selfish, strutting, bantam cock that he is. And maybe the society that has been built around him deserves to be shaken to the ground. Perhaps, as is argued, the free Subject is a myth, that serves to disguise a real world of repression and exclusion. If that is so, our society needs to be reappraised from top to bottom. This book is an attempt to start that reappraisal, and to ask whether we ought to dump the Subject or resurrect him.

Slovenian philosopher Slavoj Žižek opens his book *The Ticklish Subject* with this pastiche of *The Communist Manifesto*: 'A spectre is haunting Western academia...the spectre of the Cartesian subject. All academic powers have entered into an unholy alliance to exorcise this spectre.'¹⁸ Slavoj Žižek names feminists, New Age obscurantists, postmodern deconstructionists and deep ecologists as differing intellectual trends which now coalesce in their hostility to what he calls the Cartesian subject.

In Part One I explore what Žižek calls the unholy alliance against the Subject, in theory. The first three chapters deal with the direct critique of the Subject. The idea that the Subject is historically contingent and redundant is dealt with in Chapter One, which also considers attempts to rescue the Subject from the effects of relativism. Chapter Two examines the social construction of the Subject, investigating in particular the similarities between poststructuralist and communitarian accounts of subject formation and contemporary feminist critiques of the discriminatory exclusivity of subjectivity. Chapter Three is an account of the origins of 'the Other' in the elimination of the Subject from Hegel's Master-Slave dialectic.

Chapter Four outlines three attempts to theorise society without the Subject: Foucault's theory of power, Habermas's concept of intersubjectivity, and sociobiology. Finally Chapter Five looks at the limitations of two modern versions of individualism, the theories of identity that arose along with poststructuralism, and the methodological individualism of Popper and Hayek which were the major theoretical influence on the free market conservatism of the late twentieth century. Part Two changes the pace of the investigation to look at the real world conflicts through which the subject has been called into question. In particular I am concerned to isolate those factors which helped to take anti-humanism from the margins of the French left in 1968 to its place as one of the key assumptions of mainstream Western politics by the end of the century. These trends are introduced by two chapters on the formative political experiences of the French intelligentsia,

who were the most influential critics of subjectivity. Chapter Six looks in detail at the pivotal role of France's war against Algeria in the development of anti-humanist ideas. The double failure of French republicanism and the French communist left to back the cause of national liberation cast Enlightenment humanism as the agent of repression and the Algerian masses as its irreconcilable Other. In Chapter Seven the key events in the life of Louis Althusser graphically illustrate the political dynamics of the denial of subjectivity.

Chapter Eight analyses the crisis of the left which developed after the events of 1968. It is particularly concerned with the combined impact of the historical defeat of organised labour in Europe and the New Left's contemporaneous search for new agents of social change. The failure of the New Right in Britain and America to revitalise a triumphant individualism despite their defeat of the left is the subject of Chapter Nine. Chapter Ten analyses the character of politics after the end of left and right with particular reference to the 'Third Way' administrations of Bill Clinton and Tony Blair. The focus is on the development of politics as 'a process without a subject', one which contrasts sharply with classical political theory.

Part Three turns from politics to society, and sketches the social contours of a world without the Subject. It looks both at the retreat of the elite from leadership in society, and at the involution of social relations based on degraded subjectivity.

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Degrading the Subject in Theory

In the 1960s and 1970s a number of different thinkers started to question the validity of the human Subject. Their ideas were 'ahead' of their time. A variety of different theories arose out of the philosophy called 'phenomenology' and the sociological outlook influenced by the linguistic theory 'structuralism'. Together, these ideas coalesced into an outlook popularised as postmodernism. The origin of these ideas is mostly French, but postmodernism caught a mood amongst academics, and more broadly amongst opinion-formers, and the *culturati* to quickly gain a currency in intellectual life in the 1980s and 1990s. By the end of the Millennium the new papal encyclical found John Paul II embracing postmodern despair rather than giving a message of hope. Noting that postmodern 'nihilism has been justified in a sense by the terrible experience of evil which has marked our age', the pope asserts that 'such a dramatic experience has ensured the collapse of rationalist optimism, which viewed history as the triumphant progress of reason, the source of all happiness and freedom'.¹⁹ His Holiness warns against 'a certain positivist cast of mind' which 'continues to nurture the illusion that, thanks to scientific and technical progress, man and woman may live as a demiurge, single-handedly and completely taking charge of their destiny'.

The Pope is echoing the judgement of the postmodernists. It was Jean-François Lyotard who best summed up the assessment of the modern age and its overriding ideologies. 'I will use the term modern to designate any science that legitimates itself with reference to a metadiscourse ... making an explicit appeal to some grand narrative, such as the dialectics of Spirit, the hermeneutics of meaning, the emancipation of the rational or working Subject, or the creation of wealth.'²⁰ Rejecting these defining narrative structures of modernity, Lyotard announced the *post-modern* age in the following way: 'I define postmodernism as incredulity towards metanarratives.'²¹ As is now well-known, postmodernism was defined as a time when we could do away with the ideologies upon which we had relied, as so many tall tales, designed to make the listener happy and satisfied, but with no greater significance. Socialism, the free market, Christianity, the nuclear family, scientific progress were 'exposed' as so many bedtime stories told to lull us children into sleep.

It was not immediately clear that the implications of the theory called first 'post-structuralism' and later postmodernism were hostile to subjectivity. Indeed the opposite appeared to be the case. The postmodernists were first and foremost charged with an *excessive* subjectivity that jeopardised objectivity. To scientists and conservatives the hallmark of these new ideas was their scepticism towards a singular objective truth. The charge of relativism was made against postmodernists.²² In a celebrated assault on the postmodernists, scientists Alan Sokal and Jean Bricmont wrote: 'A second target of our

book is epistemic relativism, that modern science is nothing more than a “myth”, a “narration” or a “social construction”. To their critics it seemed as if subjective predilection had been elevated over objective fact in this new outlook. Moral philosopher Alain Finkielkraut parodies the postmodern reprobate as saying ‘Let me do what I want myself!’. Finkielkraut continues: ‘No transcendent or traditional authority, and not even a plain majoritarian one, can shape the preferences of your postmodern man or regulate his behaviour’.²³ The shortcoming of the postmodernists, then, was that they resisted all authority, in a riot of subjective preference. The critics pointed to the promiscuous way that the postmodernists *deconstructed* each and every scientific and moral certainty as if these were no more than big stories, meta or grand narratives. But according to the postmodernists, such metanarratives tended to eradicate differences, imposing a lifeless uniformity. Where metanarratives reduced complexity to self-sameness, the method of deconstruction restored the fundamental difference of things.²⁴ To the natural scientists and conservatives, such a singular elevation of difference suggested a thoroughgoing subjectivism, in which objectivity was sacrificed to personal subjective responses.

But the deconstruction was not only directed outward towards the objective world, as the critics feared. The very promiscuity of the postmodern deconstruction of all grand narratives meant that the grandest of all narratives, that of the Subject itself, would not remain untouched. Jacques Derrida, for example, insists that difference is so primordial that it cannot be kept outside of the Subject, but must call into question the Subject itself:

‘What differs? Who differs? What is *différance*?...if we accepted this form of the question, in its meaning and its syntax (“What is?” “Who is?” “What is that?”), we would have to conclude that *différance* has been derived, has happened, is to be mastered and governed on the basis of the point of a present being as a *Subject* a *who*.’²⁵

Derrida’s style is wilfully demanding. (In *Of Grammatology* he insists that his intention is ‘to make enigmatic ... the very words with which we designate what is closest to us’.²⁶) But allowing for his specialised vocabulary, the meaning is clear enough. It is not that there are differences between Subjects, he is saying. That much would simply be a pluralistic outlook: ‘different strokes for different folks’. But that does not go far enough for Derrida. If we were just talking about differences between people, then we would have already assumed the existence of these unitary Subjects prior to difference. And then difference would only be a predicate of these previously existing Subjects. But for Derrida, difference, or *différance*, comes before the Subject. To ask what or who differs assumes the prior existence of Subjects who differ. Derrida is insisting on the priority of difference over the Subject. The implication is that the Subject, too, cannot be assumed to be a unitary whole without difference, but rather, must in turn, itself be deconstructed.

In *Of Grammatology*, Derrida makes it clear that his deconstruction of the claims of objectivity go hand in hand with the deconstruction of subjectivity.²⁷ Just as claims to objective truth are a narrative that must be dispelled, so too is subjectivity a myth. In his book *Of Spirit*, he goes one step further in rejecting subjectivity. The book is a discussion of the philosopher and Nazi Martin Heidegger. In it Derrida indicates that Heidegger's appeal to the Spirit of the West is a perverse outcome of the rational Subject of Enlightenment thinking. Derrida goes on to criticise 'opposition to racism, totalitarianism, to Nazism, to fascism' that is undertaken 'in the name of the spirit, and even of the freedom of (the) spirit, in the name of an axiomatic – for example, that of democracy or "human rights" – which directly or not comes back to this metaphysics of Subjectivity.'²⁸ Here, the narratives of freedom and democracy are being criticised because they imply the emancipation of a Subject (in this case a people). In Derrida's eyes, that appeal to the 'metaphysics of Subjectivity' puts them on a par with fascism, because fascism, as represented here by Martin Heidegger, also appeals to a *Subject*, the Spirit of the West.

The turn of Derrida's argument is surprising. How readily he associates democracy and fascism! And that the common strand should be their shared commitment to subjectivity. It is tempting to think that Derrida is simply making an unduly formal abstraction, while carried away with a complex argument. Perhaps on some plane one could say that fascism and democracy are the same since both are political forms of organisation. In such a case it would simply be a rather forced parallel, like the insight that Hitler, Stalin and Saddam Hussein all have moustaches. But Derrida means more than this. The common bond between fascism and democracy is not incidental, but a fatal flaw; and the specific bond that Derrida alights upon is *subjectivity*. Phillipe Lacoue-Labarthe, another philosopher, influenced by Derrida, makes the point more forcefully, when he writes that 'Fascism is a humanism':

'in that it rests on a determination of *humanitas*, which is, in its eyes, more powerful, ie, more effective, than any other. The Subject of absolute self-creation, even if it transcends all the determinations of the modern Subject in an immediately natural position (the particularity of race), brings together and concretises these same determinations and sets itself up as the Subject, absolutely speaking.'²⁹

Lacoue-Labarthe makes explicit the meaning of the deconstruction of the metaphysics of the Subject. Self-creation, once a virtue, is here seen as fascistic. Humanism is a fascism, because humanism puts man at the centre, makes man's activity the substance of history. The initial reaction against the poststructuralist thinkers was to protest at their extreme subjectivism and consequent dismissal of 'objective truth'. But what that criticism missed was that the Subject was also the target of deconstruction, perhaps especially so. Implicit in this double movement is the possibility that Subject and object are not opposed, but mutually supporting terms. If the singular objective ground is called into question, then so too is the singular and unified Subject. And, perhaps more

importantly, the degradation of the Subject destroys the basis of a sustained investigation of the objective. In prosaic terms, if we cannot be sure of the investigator, there can be no investigation.

It was the poststructuralist thinkers who turned most pointedly upon the Subject. But this trend was not restricted to those French researchers around Jacques Derrida, Michel Foucault, Louis Althusser and Jacques Lacan. If they enunciated the critique most directly, others too lent their own distinctive quality to the critique of the Subject. Historians and social commentators were more often struck by the limitations of subjectivity. It seemed to them that the Subject was exclusively male, propertied, white, heterosexual, adult. In these criticisms a fine line was being drawn – ought free subjectivity to be broadened to include those social groups excluded? Or, conversely, was the Subject in any event so narrowly defined as to be a poor model for the excluded to imitate? It did not follow that the norm established by the White European Male was the right one for those that were already set apart by that very norm. That is to say, the problem might not be the denial of subjectivity, but on the contrary, subjectivity itself could be intrinsically domineering and exclusive. If that were the case, then the criticism of exclusivity becomes directly a criticism of subjectivity. The claim of the universality of subjectivity was challenged, and exposed as its opposite, partiality. The universal outlook of Man, was revealed to be biased in terms of gender, property, race, sexual orientation and age. The centrality of Man was challenged, precisely for its one-sidedness. Humanism was shown to be Eurocentric, ethnocentric, and ultimately anthropocentric. Having fought to de-throne Gods and Kings to take his rightful place at centre stage, the Subject was now de-centred in turn. In his place stood the excluded *Other*.

In all respects the claims of human agency were put to the test. The central character of the human story had been taken for granted until this point. But now, he was to be taken apart, or deconstructed, knocked off his pedestal, or de-centred. A great involution in thinking was taking place. There had always been disagreements before about how to live, about morality, about social and political organisation, about how to interpret historical events. But as a rule it was accepted that human freedom was a venerable goal, whatever disagreements there might be about achieving it. Now for the first time – outside of the extremes of Conservative thinking – a misanthropic strain emerged that questioned whether Man was indeed the central figure of the human story, and whether he deserved to be.

Part 2, pages 12-32

Chapter One

The Beginning and the End of the Subject

'As the archaeology of our thought easily shows, man is an invention of a recent date. And one perhaps nearing to its end. ... one can certainly wager that man would be erased, like a face drawn in the sand at the edge of the sea.'³⁰

Michel Foucault's conclusion to *The Order of Things* is startling. In the argument which precedes this conclusion, Foucault demonstrates that the centrality of man is not a universal human condition, but a modern preoccupation that has been with us only since the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries.

Conventional thinking has it that people throughout time have been essentially similar, only their circumstances changing. Naturally enough, when trying to imagine the lives of people in other ages you draw upon your own self-image to fill in the gaps. School history projects invite pupils to imagine what a child's life would have been like in Roman Britain. Often they start by imagining what life would be like without television. But it is more difficult to understand that childhood itself is an invention of a later age, and that the definitions between infancy, adolescence and adulthood that structure our lives would have been alien to most people in most ages. Yet more difficult to understand is the idea that the centrality of man, as the autonomous Subject of history and society, is far from being a universal condition of the human species. But in *The Order of Things* Foucault takes the relatively late development of the human sciences, economics, psychology and philology, as an indicator of the appearance of their Subject matter, the human Subject. He writes:

'The eighteenth century did not hand down to them [the human sciences], in the name of man or human nature a space, circumscribed on the outside but still empty which it was then their role to cover or analyse. The epistemological field traversed by the human sciences was not laid down in advance: no philosophy, no political or moral option, no empirical science of any kind, no observation of the human body, no analysis of sensation, imagination or the passions, had ever encountered in the seventeenth or eighteenth century, anything like man; *for man did not exist*.'³¹

Foucault's point is that the human sciences did not discover man, as an empirical fact, waiting to be investigated. Rather, he argues, these very scientific discourses themselves brought man into being: 'They appeared when man constituted himself in Western

culture as both that which must be conceived of and that which is to be known.’³² Here it is Western culture, including the human sciences, which constitutes the Subject. More conventional thinking would have said that it was Man who created Western culture, including the human sciences. In this respect, conventional thought follows the basic outline established in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries by Hobbes, Shaftesbury, Locke and Rousseau: man exists naturally as a free Subject first, only afterwards entering into civil society. Foucault reverses the order of things, by making civil society the author of the free individual.

However provocative Foucault’s mode of expression is, he was pushing at an open door. The evidence for the historically limited nature of the human Subject is well established. A greater sensitivity to historical change amongst nineteenth and twentieth-century theorists led to a criticism of the natural right theories of the eighteenth century. The German philosopher GWF Hegel was amongst the first to question the ‘fiction of the state of nature’ suggesting that in such theories ‘the desired outcome is presupposed’ as if it were a natural condition.³³ The nineteenth-century socialist Karl Marx criticised Feuerbach’s humanism precisely because it uncritically adopted ‘the standpoint of civil’ which is to say, capitalist, ‘society’.³⁴ Following Marx, the Canadian political scientist CB Macpherson faults John Locke for ‘having read back into the nature of men and society, certain preconceptions about the nature of seventeenth-century man and society which he generalises quite unhistorically’.³⁵ What Hegel, Marx and Macpherson are all doing is qualifying the claims of the eighteenth-century individual to a natural existence. Instead, they are suggesting, this character has a history. In certain historical circumstances the possibilities of the free individual come into being. By implication, these circumstances can be expected to pass into the historical past. The absolute claim of the natural individual has been qualified historically.³⁶

However, for poststructuralists like Foucault, the Hegelian and Marxist analyses of the historical limitations of the bourgeois subject do not go far enough. The poststructuralists understood that these historical qualifications upon the *bourgeois* Subject did not imply a rejection of the historical Subject as such. Rather, as the poststructuralists saw it, these analyses tended to criticise the specific form of the bourgeois Subject, only as a feint, through which an idealised *human* Subject could be promoted. With Hegel, the specific historical instances of subjectivity were seen to be manifestations of a transhistorical Subject, the Idea.³⁷ Following Hegel, Marx also rejected the specifically truncated form of the individual bourgeois Subject to champion the working class subject: ‘The Proletariat alone is a really revolutionary class’, he writes, ‘the proletarian movement is the self-conscious, independent movement of the immense majority, in the interests of the immense majority’.³⁸ The Marxist Georg Lukacs, deploying the language of German philosophy, argues that for Marx, the revolutionary ‘proletariat is the identical Subject-Object of the history of society’ – meaning that the working class is both the active subject of history, as well as an

objective force.³⁹ As we shall see, the poststructuralists could never be satisfied with this trumpeting of the proletarian Subject of history, which seemed to fall short of their critical insight into the historical contingency of the Subject. They did not want to restore the Subject in a more plausible version. To them it seemed that Marx in particular had simply back-tracked on the critique of the Subject, criticising the Subject in the name of the Subject and smuggling the old reprobate back in, disguised with clogs and a cloth cap.

Jean Baudrillard explained:

‘Historical materialism, dialectics, modes of production, labour-power – through these concepts Marxist theory has sought to shatter the abstract universality of the concepts of bourgeois thought (Nature and Progress, Man and Reason, formal Logic, Work, Exchange, etc). Yet Marxism in turn universalises them with a “critical” imperialism as ferocious as the other’s.’⁴⁰

‘Marxism’ Baudrillard disparages ‘is the vision of a future “freedom” based on a conscious domination of nature’ and therefore ‘it is not radical’ but ‘led despite itself to reproduce the roots of the system of political economy’, ie, capitalism.⁴¹ Here Baudrillard anticipates one of the central motifs of the degradation of the Subject, the charge of anthropocentrism. Most pointedly, though, it is the charge that Marxism is contiguous with the social system it sought to challenge, in promoting the idea of a real freedom. For Marx of course, that was precisely the point of the criticism of the alienation of human powers in capital, to institute a real subjectivity, in place of the empty husk of the bourgeois subject. Amongst poststructuralist thinkers it was only Althusser who kept faith with the name of Marx. For the rest, they sought a more radical historicisation than Marx or Hegel could offer.

Foucault found his radical historicism in the nineteenth-century German anti-philosopher Friedrich Nietzsche. Nietzsche’s *Genealogy of Morals* in particular was a model. Nietzsche drew upon the increasing historical and philological evidence regarding the moral systems of other times and cultures, in particular of the ancient Greeks and the early Christians. Morality had been seen as fixed: what was right was right for all time. Nietzsche shows that right and wrong are historically specific categories, arising, largely from the slave-mentality of the early Christians. Moral claims that had been assumed to be set in stone were broken apart by Nietzsche’s caustic criticism. This was for Foucault a model for dislodging the eternal claims of the natural individual. Indeed, Nietzsche anticipates the dislodging of the subject with this aside: ‘science still ... has not disposed of that little changeling the “Subject”.’⁴² It was a challenge that Foucault took up on science’s behalf. Foucault was adopting Nietzsche’s ‘genealogical’ method in uncovering the transitory and fleeting character of Man.

Derrida, by contrast, drew upon Martin Heidegger’s philosophy as the basis of his own approach, which he called ‘deconstruction’. Heidegger felt that philosophy, especially

his own chosen field of philosophy, the 'philosophy of being' or ontology was unduly dominated by a preoccupation with the Subject, due to the influence of the seventeenth-century thinker Rene Descartes. It was Descartes, who enthroned the thinking Subject as the arbiter of certain knowledge, when he famously declared, '*ego cogito ergo sum*' or 'I think, therefore I am'. Heidegger bemoaned the fact that such concepts as 'the *ego cogito* of Descartes, the subject, the "I", reason, spirit, person' 'have served as the primary guides' but 'remain uninterrogated'.⁴³ Under the heading 'The Destruction of Ontology', Heidegger says this: 'if the question of Being is to have its own history made transparent, then this hardened tradition', he means the domination of Descartes' thinking Subject over philosophy 'must be loosened up...dissolved'. 'We are to destroy the traditional content of...ontology'.⁴⁴ It was Heidegger's chosen task to strip away the superficial overlay of modern Cartesian subjectivity that Derrida adopts. As we saw in the discussion of Heidegger's Nazism, where Derrida faults Heidegger it is for the lingering trace of such Subjectivity that he suspects still lurks in the master's work. It is Heidegger's 'Destruction of Ontology' that suggests Derrida's deconstructionist approach. Like Heidegger, Derrida sets about excising the merely recent excrescence of Subjectivity.

One should not necessarily make too much of theoretical sources that the poststructuralists drew upon to found their historical relativisation of the Subject. The poststructuralists were thinkers who were responding to quite distinctive problems and times. What is important is that the sense of Man's transience was usefully articulated by reference back to Heidegger and Nietzsche rather than to Hegel and Marx, who were 'compromised' by their optimism towards the possibilities of the Subject, however modified. It was Heidegger and Nietzsche who formulated the demand for the destruction of the Subject altogether. Their approach was to substitute the temporal contingency of the subject for an argument. Merely to specify the Subject historically, to situate its emergence in time already seems to call it into question. Why the thing being criticised ought to be rejected does not need to be stated. It is the kind of criticism popularly expressed in the phrase 'that's so old'.

Rescuing the Subject

Some philosophers and political scientists have tried to separate the question of the historical emergence of the Subject from its implied transience. In a cunning feint the American pragmatist Richard Rorty happily acknowledges that 'we are free to see the self centreless, as a historical contingency all the way through'.⁴⁵ But, he argues, 'a sense of human subjectivity as a centreless bundle of contingencies...is compatible with any sort of politics, including liberal politics'.⁴⁶ Rorty is saying that the knowledge of the historical relativity of the Subject does not make a politics based on the free Subject, liberalism, impossible. It is a daring manoeuvre. He is jettisoning the apparently stronger claim of the eighteenth-century founders of liberal politics that the individual is in a

state of nature, born free. Instead Rorty occupies his opponents' ground, acknowledging the historical facts that the Subject is a thing of recent invention, and says, 'a jolly good one, too'. In this way the question of the end of the Subject is sidestepped altogether. The onus is back on the critics to make the case against the Subject.

Rorty explains the revision of natural right theory: 'Even if nothing else survives from the age of the democratic revolutions, perhaps our descendants will remember that social institutions can be viewed as experiments in cooperation rather than as attempts to embody a universal and ahistorical order.'⁴⁷ Rorty is saying that we do not need to believe that liberty is a natural faculty of Man to believe that it is a good thing. We can just adopt it as the last, best hope of humanity. German political scientist Karl-Otto Apel makes a similar objection to Rorty when he rightly asks whether enlightenment values really have 'proved to be culture-dependent not only by their genesis but with regard to their validity?'⁴⁸ He is saying that because historically individual rights happened to arise in the Western corner of Europe that might mean that their genesis 'proved to be culture dependent'. But it does not follow that they are valid only for Europeans. Rather, he is suggesting, they are valid for all peoples, whatever their culture.

Rorty sums up his political philosophy with the witty self-description 'postmodernist bourgeois liberalism'. He explains that 'I call it "bourgeois" to emphasise that most of the people I am talking about would have no quarrel with the Marxist claim that a lot of those institutions and practices are possible and justifiable only in certain historical and especially economic, conditions'. Adding 'I use "postmodernist" in a sense given this term by Jean François Lyotard, who says that the postmodern attitude is the "distrust of metanarratives"'.⁴⁹ So the sense of the historical contingency of the liberal Subject, for example, does not necessarily clash with the postmodern 'distrust of metanarratives'. Rorty is tweaking the poststructuralists' tails when he tells them that their historical contingency is owed as much to Marx as to Nietzsche or Heidegger. But he suspects that they would not be satisfied that Marx's historical relativisation was sufficient when he admits that his postmodern bourgeois liberalism 'sounds oxymoronic'.⁵⁰

Like Rorty, the legal theorist John Rawls seeks to save the rights-bearing Subject while conceding the unlikelihood of his emerging ready-made from the state of nature. Rawls wants to save his Subject from being the mere effect of his cultural context. He wants to sustain the notion of an 'unencumbered Self', that is a Self that can stand apart from any vested interests it may have, despite finding the natural individual implausible. What Rawls is trying to do is to rid the liberal order, in which free individual Subjects hold sway, of the charge of partiality, of bias towards the wealthy, those who have succeeded in the 'rat race'. Rawls has recourse to the following thought experiment: imagine the social order that you would choose, if you were wholly ignorant of where you were likely to end up on the pecking order. Rawls suggests that, from 'behind the veil of ignorance' you could be expected to choose a social system that favoured liberty and the possibilities of self-advancement – because very few people would write off their

own chances to gain by their efforts. At the same time he says that since most of us fear poverty would be a fall from which we would not recover, most too would prefer to see a safety net of welfare in place, since 'behind the veil of ignorance' one cannot know where one will end up. The thought-experiment of the veil of ignorance usefully leads to the expected result: that a liberal society with a welfare state, Rawls' own, is the one that most would choose if the choosing were 'fair', which is to say, not undertaken from one's actual social standing, but from a disinterested vantage point. 'The veil of ignorance' is a theoretical device that substitutes for 'the state of nature' in natural right theories, a secular, non-natural basis for individual rights. As we shall see, Rawls' 'unencumbered Self' is open to more objections than Rorty's centreless self.

The late Cornelius Castoriadis, social activist and iconoclastic thinker, takes the historical emergence of the Subject as axiomatic, but at the same time sees the Subject, like Rorty, as worthy nonetheless. 'Of ['human subjectivity'] one ought to say that, as a relatively recent historical creation, it is virtual in every human being, but it is certainly not a fated process.' At which point he is in full agreement with the poststructuralists – perhaps not surprisingly, since many of them, like Lyotard, studied with Castoriadis in his radical group Socialism or Barbarism in France in the 1950s and 1960s. But unlike Derrida, Castoriadis associates the authoritarian regimes of the mid-twentieth century with the extinguishing of subjectivity, rather than with its reign. 'Recent and present history offers massive and horrifying examples in which the last traces of reflectiveness and of a will of one's own, which human beings can possess are reduced to nothing by the social (political) institution.'⁵¹

Indicative of a wholly distinctive political engagement to that of the poststructuralists who came after him, Castoriadis sees fascism and Stalinism as the negation of subjectivity, where they would see it as the culmination of subjectivity. Castoriadis directly answers the charge that any defence of the individual implies a naturalistic theory of individualism. The individual should be seen not as a natural given, but an historical achievement. 'Is there a unity to the singular human being beyond its corporeal identity and the chronological container of its "history?"', he asks. 'There is a unity that is aimed at or that we ought to aim at: the unity of reflective self-representation and of the deliberate activities one undertakes.' And to rebut the specific charge of ahistoricism, he adds, "'Unity" here does not mean, of course, invariability through time'.⁵² But even in that last qualification, one can sense a certain defensiveness in Castoriadis' tone.

With Rorty and Castoriadis, the Canadian Hegel-scholar of the old New Left, Charles Taylor seeks to subvert the postmodern historicisation of the Subject with his book *The Sources of the Self*. The book is a great compendium of the differing historical contributions to modern subjectivity, or the Self, showing the distinctive sources, from the Attic legacy through the Renaissance and Enlightenment to the Romantic modifications of subjectivity. The effect is to lay claim to a deep understanding of the

way that the Self has been historically constituted in an implicit challenge to some of the more glib statements about the 'recent invention' of the Subject. But at the same time, Taylor is demonstrating the nobility of this historical achievement. His approach to historical development is Hegelian and positivistic, embracing the real in all of its development, rather than Nietzschean and negative. But as we shall see later, Taylor's Subject is bounded in other ways than historically.

For all of the attempts to sidestep the historical relativisation of the Subject, it is difficult not to think that these are posed defensively. The belief that the human Subject is transient is more of an intuitive response than a rational one. It is not necessarily susceptible to a rational argument. The claims of liberal societies that Rorty and Rawls are defending are precisely what are called into question in the presentiment of the transcendence of the human. Conceding the transience of the Subject but defending liberal norms is not likely to satisfy the critics of subjectivity. The sense that the Subject is intrinsically limited is well expressed in Lyotard's introduction to his book *The Inhuman*. There he argues that 'the socioeconomic decision-maker' uses the discourse of free subjectivity 'to legitimate his or her options: competitiveness, better distribution of costs, democracy in society, enterprise, school and family. Even the rights of man can be appealed to in reinforcement of the authority of the system'.⁵³ With this degree of distrust and alienation from family, democracy and school and even the idea of rights, the modest defence of liberal democracies made by Rorty and Rawls is simply missing the point.

The Posthuman

In an essay on the fall of the Berlin Wall and the subsequent war in the Gulf, Lyotard expresses his distance from the competing 'systems' in these conflicts with the observation that 'the hero' in 'this fable' 'is no longer Man'.⁵⁴ Instead, Lyotard sketches a fable narrated by 'the system', in which energy dispersed in random particles' in 'the vastness of the cosmos' undergoes 'internal differentiation' before 'Entropy' leads to 'random distribution'. On the surface of the Earth "'living" systems' reverse entropy and develop 'sexed reproduction' giving rise to 'the chance of mutations ("misreadings")'. 'After some time, the system called Man was selected' and 'after some [more] time, it happened that systems called liberal democracies came to be recognised as the most appropriate for the task of controlling events in whatever field they occur'. 'In liberal democratic systems, everybody could believe what they liked...provided that they contributed to the system as energetically as they could.'

'Given the increased self-control of the open system, it was likely that it would be the winner in the competition among the systems all over the Earth....Nothing seemed able to stop the development of this system except the Sun and the unavoidable collapse of the whole star system.'⁵⁵

Thus far the meaning of Lyotard's fable is to re-tell the human history without the human subject – except as the illusion of freedom in liberal democratic societies. By making human history a mere episode within the infinitely greater history of the cosmos, Lyotard succeeds in belittling man and his achievements. But at this point, Lyotard's fable takes an interesting turn:

'In order to meet this predictable challenge, the system was already in the process of developing the prosthesis that would enable it to survive after the solar sources of energy, which had contributed to the genesis of the living systems, were wiped out....research was devoted to the problem of adjusting or replacing living bodies so that human brains would still be able to work with the only forms of energy left available in the cosmos – thus preparing for the first exodus of the negentropic system far from the Earth.'

'What Man and "its" brain or, better, the Brain and its man would look like in the days of the final terrestrial challenge, the story did not say.'

Lyotard's speculations are misanthropic, and bear the imprint of a sense of helplessness and futility towards the historic events unfolding in front of him. His bleached-out natural history of man combines the dumb essence of sociobiology with the dehumanised systems theory influenced by cybernetics. This, perhaps, is the culmination of the radically historicised theory of Man. Set in a cosmic context so vast that all his subjectivity is diminished to an illusion fostered by a self-reproducing system, of which he is merely the organ. But it is the conclusion that is compelling. The End of the World is Nigh, the old lunatic with the sandwich board used to warn us. But a more bizarre fate now unfolds. Even extinction offers no release from the self-reproducing system, as humanity is transcended. Though he does not name it here, it is the figure of the posthuman that has arrived.

'You are posthuman and hardwired', sing the American punk band Manson, briefly notorious after being scapegoated for having 'inspired' the 1999 Columbine High School massacre.⁵⁶ The image of an evolutionary transcendence of the merely human has been with us since Nietzsche's *Man and Superman*, and a mainstay of adolescent culture from the American comic book characters the *X-Men* to the seventies British TV series *The Tomorrow People*. It is perhaps a normal enough fantasy to imagine oneself the mutant originator of a wholly new species, the next stage of evolution after *homo sapiens*. Those earlier biological mutations generally aspired to 'special powers', telepathy and the like. But today's 'posthumans' draw their inspiration from the internet rather than genetics.

Max More, founder of the Extropian Institute suggests that humanity's time is almost up: 'Not because we will destroy ourselves, but because we will transcend our humanity. We are becoming transhuman persons in transition to a posthuman era in which human limits will have been overcome.' The Transhumanist FAQ prepared by Nick

Bostrom et al explains that 'A posthuman is a human descendant who has been augmented to such a degree as to be no longer a human'. Lyotard's vision of 'research...devoted to the problem of adjusting or replacing living bodies so that human brains would still be able to work' is embellished in the Transhumanist FAQ. The most potent image is that of 'Uploading (sometimes called "mind uploading" or "brain reconstruction")...the hypothetical process of transferring a mind from a biological brain to a computer'. One can copy an electronic file of data onto your computer from another through the telephone wires, which is called downloading a file from 'the Net'. The network of possible telephone connections between computers, personal and institutional, sustains the illusion of a realm known as the internet, or more poetically cyberspace.⁵⁷ Uploading reverses the image, to imagine that one's 'brain waves' or 'synaptic patterns' (the images are drawn from different eras of science fiction) could be copied in the opposite direction, onto 'the Net'. Once projected into the cybernetic ether, the personality has transcended its corporeal form, to become part of the traffic of information that passes through the internet.

Donna Haraway's *Cyborg Manifesto* was an early inspiration to the current generation of posthumans. Haraway has speculated about the way that technology could break down the traditional Subject. Specifically, she looks forward to a new race of beings, part man and part machine, cyborgs. In principle, she is saying, the future is already here. Pacemakers, prosthetic limbs and modern warfare all indicate the growing interface between human biology and technology. She is conscious of the irony that a positive embrace of technology's possibilities is more usually associated with nineteenth-century ideologies: 'The main trouble with cyborgs, of course is that they are the illegitimate offspring of militarism and patriarchal capitalism, not to mention state socialism. But illegitimate offspring are often exceedingly unfaithful to their origins....From one perspective, a cyborg world is about the final imposition of a grid of control on the planet, about the final abstraction embodied in a Star Wars apocalypse waged in the name of defence, about the final appropriation of women's bodies in a masculinist orgy of war. From another perspective, a cyborg world might be about lived bodily and social realities in which people are not afraid of their kinship with animals and machines, not afraid of permanently partial identities and contradictory standpoints.'⁵⁸ Technology, as Haraway sees it can break with the patriarchal and domineering to dissipate the Subject into fractured identities and contradictory standpoints. Pointedly the posthuman cyborg sloughs off the accoutrements of the merely human subject:

'The cyborg is a creature in a post-gender world; it has no truck with bisexuality, pre-Oedipal symbiosis, unalienated labour, or other seductions to organic wholeness through a final appropriation of all the powers of the parts into a higher unity. In a sense the cyborg has no origin story in the 'Western' humanist sense....The cyborg is resolutely committed to partiality, irony, intimacy and perversity....The cyborg would not recognise the Garden of Eden; it is not made of mud and cannot dream of returning to dust.'⁵⁹

Haraway's posthuman cyborg seems irreligious here. But the desire to transcend the merely human form has marked echoes of religious sentiment. The sense of the historicity of the human subject began as an insight into the way that men, rather than God, shaped their own circumstances and remade themselves.⁶⁰ But increasingly that insight has been turned into its opposite. The sense of man's transience in the world reverses the humanist dethronement of God in favour of Man. Where the humanists made man the central character in his own story, the tendency of the historical relativisation of man has, perversely, led to a diminishing of man's standing. Now we are to be cowed in the face of Eternity, our own brief appearance on that vast continuum a mere happenstance.

In the final movement of the transcendence of man in the Posthuman we can see the degradation of the human Subject assume a familiar form. The 'Higher Source' religious cult believed that the Hale-Bopp comet contained a space ship that would deliver them to a 'higher evolutionary level' after they shed their bodies. In March 1997, 39 of them poisoned themselves along with cult leader Marshall Applewhite.⁶¹ The posthuman is a playful speculation, but one that expresses a sense of alienation from humanity and a fantasy desire for transcendence. In its most extreme form, it leaves piles of poisoned bodies and reduces the human essence to a video message left for those of us who still cling doggedly to the human form.

Chapter Five

The Ersatz Subject

The theoretical degradation of the autonomous Subject has been accompanied by a recuperation of an ersatz subject, pallid and more compromised than the original he displaces. Something must occupy the space left by the evacuation of the Subject. In the following we examine two versions of the truncated subject. First we look at identity theory, in which the Subject is displaced in favour of an 'identity'. Then we look at the methodological individualism adopted defensively by rights theorists to shore up the individual Subject, only to find his subjectivity is exhausted in the process.

The Identity Parade

Perhaps the most cogent assertion of the self to be found in contemporary conditions is in terms of identity. The right to have one's identity recognised for its validity is among the most contentious issues today. According to Chris Gilligan's estimates of the occurrence of the word in the titles of academic journal articles, identity has soared in importance, rating a stable 200 or so mentions between 1981 and 1989, before embarking on a steady climb to more than 700 in 1998.⁶² Despite its contentious nature, identity, sadly, is a peculiarly truncated substitute for subjective autonomy.

Identity theory began as a component of psychology, to describe child development. The process of identity formation was seen as an important stage that individuals pass through. In 1950 the Freudian analyst Erik Erikson wrote about the difficulties young people had establishing stable identities in his book *Childhood and Society*.⁶³ Elsewhere, the 'behaviourist' psychologist Erving Goffmann was developing the theory of 'social roles' and 'role-playing' to describe the way that individuals adopted given identities in social interaction.⁶⁴ These psychological theories helped develop the terminology of identity theory. These early developments in the theory were conducted in the manner of observations from the outside. Psychologists were preoccupied with the 'problem' of misidentification, such as, famously, the American Psychiatric Association's classification of homosexuality as a mental disorder.⁶⁵ Conversely, they were concerned with the difficulties of identity formation, as in Erikson's discussion of the youth 'problem'. Characteristically, the normative aspects of identity were assumed (eg, heterosexual), and deviance from the norm categorised and 'treated'.

In the 1960s and 1970s identity theory came increasingly to adopt the standpoint of the fugitive identity. Deviance from the norm was no longer considered pathological. To the contrary, identity theory today takes as its starting point those identities that are formed in opposition to the old norms. In this version, the conditions of exclusion are inverted to become a source of pride and strength. Identifications that carried a negative caché are reversed to become moments of self-assertion. Sociologists in particular were drawn to the expressions of Black Pride, and later Gay Pride as the creation of identities of resistance and opposition to the dominant culture.⁶⁶ The emergence of these apparently oppositional identities suggested new ways in which the priority of the ideal-type of the free Subject could be compromised. Juliet Mitchell pointed out that 'each class has aspects of its own culture, which are relatively autonomous. The fact is illustrated by such phrases as "working class culture", "ghetto culture", "immigrant culture", etc, and by the absent phrase – "middle class culture"'. The fact of the cultures of exclusion limits the perceived universality of 'middle class culture'. 'We don't think of "middle class culture" as something separate – it simply is the overall culture, within which are inserted these isolable other cultures', Mitchell objects.⁶⁷ As she suggests, though, the very fact of the excluded culture calls into question the claim of the middle class culture to be the archetypal culture. If the norm is refused, then it is no longer the norm.

Cultural identity is a site of resistance, and hence of action. However, identity is markedly different from subjectivity. Whereas the Subject presents itself as pure, abstract and universal, identity is specific and local. In Heidegger's typology, determinate being ('being-there') takes priority over the abstract Being.⁶⁸ Those very features that were portrayed as flaws, or even impurities by Enlightenment thinkers are instead held up as a badge of pride. The particular stance that was rejected before for its partiality is now recognised for its special insight. And that insight is precisely the limit

point of the presumed generality of the dominant identity. It appears that the now-embraced identification has a power to disrupt the norm, revealing the one-sidedness of what had purported to be all-sided.

As an ideal of resistance, though, identity is flawed. Unlike the classical model of Subject, identity is contextual and situated. It draws its authority from its given nature, rather than its future orientation. With identity theory, survival itself is the virtue. The conditions of exclusion or oppression are seen as a source of inner strength and nobility. It seems as if we are in the presence of a return to the stoical consciousness that endures hardship with equanimity. Where the principle of subjectivity is self-determining, identification takes identity from its context and location. The Subject is intrinsically undetermined, in the sense of not having its goals prescribed for it from without. It is not, however, indeterminate, because the Subject determines itself (not of course meaning that all obstacles are removed, but in the sense of deciding its own course, while taking such obstacles into account). By contrast, identity remains a response to identification. It is an inner reworking of those externally imposed norms, but still remains a response, and more, a cleaving to those conditions of its formation. 'I come from a proud heritage', Identity says to Subject. 'Don't ask me where I'm from, ask me where I'm going', Subject says to Identity.

With the development of the theory identity has come to be seen as paradoxical to many in the field. On face value, identity is disruptive, rebellious, a challenge to the received order. But this meaning of identity is strictly within context. As against the dominant model, the excluded identities are disruptive, but intrinsically they reproduce the very limitations they illuminated. Judith Butler objects to the 'foundationalist reasoning of identity politics'. She says that 'the feminist we is always and only a phantasmatic construction, one that has its purposes, but which denies the internal complexity and indeterminacy of the term and constitutes itself only through the exclusion of some part of the constituency that it simultaneously seeks to represent'.⁶⁹ She means that once the 'Subject' of the movement is determined as 'women', then the differences between women get covered up. Do straight women have the same goals as lesbian women? Not necessarily. It is pointed that Butler insists on the 'indeterminacy of the term', the term 'feminism' we presume. But surely the point is that, at least minimally, 'feminist' is a determination, that delineates and circumscribes its object – a movement for, and of, women. Butler wants to recover the indeterminacy, or open-endedness that corresponds to the idea of freedom. But identity theory in its nature takes as its starting point a bounded identity, identity that is identical to itself. It is born from a refusal of universality, and must take into itself that character of being limited.

Over and over again we find the paradox of identity theory replayed: it conjures up a feisty spirit of taking on the world, but at the same time it revels in its chains. Identity theorists having based their claims upon determinate being are constantly looking around for the undetermined moment that is contained within identity theory. How can

freedom be rediscovered within the slave compound? One response is to multiply identities. Stuart Hall writes, for example, that the postmodern subject is 'composed not of a single, several, sometimes contradictory or unresolved identities'.⁷⁰ Furthermore, identity is 'formed and transformed continuously in relation to the ways we are represented or addressed in the cultural systems which surround us'.⁷¹ Hall emphasises continuous formation and transformation to try to resurrect the open-endedness of free subjectivity. Stability and order would hardly appear to be ambitious goals. But in fact this indeterminacy is false. It is not indeterminacy *for us*. Rather it is the unpredictability of our outlying conditions, of 'the ways we are represented or addressed', which is an indeterminacy that is all the more limiting. As Herakleitos says, 'the more one puts oneself at the mercy of chance, the more chance will involve one in the laws of necessity and inevitability'.⁷² Being buffeted from one representation to another is not an indeterminacy that is open to self-determination, but rather the uncertainty that makes freedom impossible. 'Give yourself up, the cultural systems have got you surrounded!', Hall might be saying. Nor indeed is the multiplication of determinations equal to open possibilities. It is just more and more determinations, or more external shaping. The minimal freedom of 'playing off' one imposed identification against another is a peculiarly lacklustre alternative to free subjectivity – corresponding to trading for a marginal advantage. The fact that identity theorists feel obliged to talk vaguely of indeterminacy, the unresolved and so on, is not to be taken at face value. On the contrary, it is closer to the bad conscience that resists facing the determinate resolution that is identification.

Judith Butler in particular has grappled with the moment of closure that is identification, trying to hold on to the sense of subversion of identity. The parodic subversion of identity in drag interests her because of the way that it turns the imposed identification against itself. For Butler adopting a gender identity involves the continuous performance of the many gestures that make up that identity. This identification is, she says 'a process of repetition' that 'enforces its rules'. 'All signification takes place within the orbit of compulsion to repeat; "agency," then, is to be located within the possibilities of a variation on that repetition.' Butler continues, 'it is only within the practices of repetitive signifying that a subversion of identity becomes possible'.⁷³ As agency goes, this is an agency of a remarkably limited kind – 'variation on repetition'. The subversion of identity seems to have slowed to the pace of natural evolution, and quite at odds with the remarkably swift changes in socially acceptable identities in recent times. One wonders what the barrier to a more fulsome rejection of repetition is. Butler explains:

'The critical task for feminism is not to establish a point of view outside of constructed identities; that conceit is the construction of an epistemological model that would disavow its own cultural location and, hence, promote itself as a global Subject, a position that deploys exactly the imperialist strategies that feminism ought to criticise.'⁷⁴

To do more than vary the repetition would be to risk stepping outside of the constructed identity. Such conceit would, 'disavow its own cultural location', which is to say, abandon the identity ascribed to women. Worse still, it seems to suggest that taking decisions for oneself is tantamount to invading small and defenceless countries. With this degree of caution it is no wonder that Butler talks down the goal of freedom, pretending that it is pretty much the same thing as slavery, anyway: 'Feminist discourse', she regrets, 'remains trapped within the unnecessary binarism of free will and determinism'.⁷⁵ Drawing out the logic of identity theory's displacement of free subjectivity, she writes that 'there is no self that is prior...there is only a taking up of the tools where they lie, where the "taking up" is enabled by the tool lying there'.⁷⁶

Methodological Individualism

In a very different quarter from cultural studies you can find another, quite different elevation of individuality. Free market theory, as championed by FA Hayek and Karl Popper, has fallen out of favour in recent times but retains an influence from its high tide in the Reagan/Thatcher years. Hayek and Popper were both highly ideological champions of the free market against socialism. In Hayek's case, the argument was more purely made in terms of a philosophy of economics, whilst Popper, less dogmatic against state intervention broadened out the idealisation of the free economy into an 'open society'. If it seems that Popper and Hayek are marred by their association with some pointed official promotion of their work in the West, many of the more left-wing critics of their work have reluctantly admitted that the individualist critique of socialist planning has been vindicated by the failure of the Soviet bloc.⁷⁷ Whatever the truth or otherwise of the planning debate, our purpose is served by looking at the assertion of the priority of the individual over the collective in their writings.

It was Popper who most poignantly summed up the prejudice in favour of the Self when he, citing Hayek, called it 'methodological individualism'. Happily asserting that this theory is equally applicable to atomic particles, Popper goes on to insist that 'methodological individualism' is 'the quite unassailable belief that we must try to understand all collective phenomena as due to the actions, interactions, aims, hopes, and thoughts, of individual men, and', he adds, with a pointed qualification, 'as due to traditions created and preserved by individual men'.⁷⁸

Methodological individualism, a presupposed bias towards the individual over the collective in theory mirrored an ideological bias towards the free market. But it would be foolish to take the ideological bias towards the free market literally. Hayek and Popper both took the view that freedom was synonymous with a market society, one in which the state played as small a role as it could. Their criticisms of collectivism were made in the name of individual liberty. Hayek's 1944 tract, *The Road to Serfdom* was a warning against welfarism, that likened it to fascism. Popper's *Open Society and its Enemies* was a polemic against Marxism. On the face of things, Popper and Hayek were

both arguing the case for individual freedom against the oppressive might of the socialist state.

However, the underlying theme of methodological individualism was a polemic against man's hubris in presuming to take control of society. The implication of 'methodological individualism' was that social knowledge was an absurdity. The complexity of developed societies meant that it was impossible to understand them. The conceit of the social engineer was that he presumed to understand something that could not be understood. All action on the basis of such false understanding, then, would also be deluded. The limited conception of the social engineer would always fall short of the complexity of society. Furthermore, planning decisions themselves, in becoming a part of the picture, would be taken into account in the myriad decisions of individual actors. All government action would be subverted by the way that individuals took that action into account and sought to get around it. In other words, 'you can't buck the market'.

Though the free market rejection of socialism was made in the name of individual freedom, it was substantially an argument against the Subject, namely the collective Subject. Hayek and Popper's methodological individualism started with the assumption that collective action was an impossibility. The more argumentative side of their ideas made it clear that they were trying to attack a real living Subject, the collective Subject of organised labour, in the name of an abstract Subject, the free individual. When Hayek wrote that he had succeeded in winning the intellectual argument against his state-spending rival economist John Maynard Keynes, he warned: 'There will be no more urgent need than to erect new defences against the onslaughts of popular Keynesianism.'⁷⁹ Hayek reveals the unspoken meaning of the campaign against serfdom. While he feared the servitude of the propertied classes before a socialist state, the working classes were properly serfs, against whom one must 'erect defences'. In his essays 'The confusion of language in political thought' and 'Economic freedom and representative government', Hayek argues against democracy on the grounds that representative government limits individual freedom.⁸⁰ The collective Subject of 'the People' was of course an absurdity to Hayek, for whom collectivities are delusions.

It is interesting that even as unashamed a capitalist ideologue as Hayek was unable to sustain a positive attitude towards individual subjectivity. In the *Fatal Conceit: The Errors of Socialism* it is clear that socialism is only the express form of a more destructive conceit, reason itself. 'Mind is not a guide, but a product of cultural evolution and is based more on imitation than on insight or reason', he wrote.⁸¹ Whereas he had as a young man insisted that his philosophy was liberal rather than conservative, the older Hayek was to be found arguing that 'tradition is in some respects superior to, or "wiser" than, human reason'.⁸² 'Virtually all our benefits of civilisation, and indeed our very existence, rest, I believe, on our continuing willingness to shoulder the burden of tradition.'⁸³ From warning against the *Road to Serfdom*, Hayek appears in *The Fatal Conceit* to be arguing for it. This is, though, to be expected. Methodological

individualism was never what it appeared to be. Superficially it was the case for individual freedom against collective enslavement. In substance it was the case against the conceit of human reason, with reference to the collective Subject. Since the substantial argument was the argument against the conceit of reason, we could anticipate that even individual reason would fall away in the face of a subservience to tradition more in keeping with the communitarians. Furthermore, a *methodological* individualism would have to be the opposite of a true individual subjectivity. This individualism is not attained, but presumed at the outset. Individuality is not a self-assertion but something that is taken for granted. That contradicts the very meaning of subjectivity as self-determining.

An example of the limitations of methodological individualism can be seen in the work of PF Strawson and his son Galen, both of whom worked in the analytical philosophical tradition on which Popper and Hayek drew. The elder Strawson's book *Individuals* took individuals as a primary fact of existence. Material bodies 'in our actual conceptual scheme', he says, are 'basic particulars'. Persons are identified by the identification of their bodies first, but also by their states of consciousness. It is 'a necessary condition', he says, 'of ascribing states of consciousness, experiences, to oneself, in the way that one does, that one should be able to ascribe them, or be prepared to ascribe them to others who are not oneself'.⁸⁴ The so-called 'problem of other minds' has preoccupied analytical philosophers for many years. A philosophy that takes as its starting point the disaggregation, or analysis, of wholes into their constituent parts, or individuals, has problems understanding the overarching moment of communication. Strawson's response here is to derive community from self-reflection. As I see my own mind, I can assume other minds.

This assumption has not stood the test of time. The American analytic philosopher Richard Rorty reflecting long and hard on the possibility of other minds, came to the conclusion that his own – and everyone else's – was an illusion, 'our Glassy Essence', invented by Descartes. In truth we were 'persons without minds'.⁸⁵ Rorty meant that there was no need to presuppose the existence of a homunculus seated somewhere in the brain behind your actions. Analysing away, he dispensed with that hypothesis. Galen Strawson, also had reason to doubt the existence of the mind as an independent motivating force. The younger Galen raises a Basic Argument against free will:

1. It is undeniable that one is the way one is, initially, as a result of heredity and early experience, and it is undeniable that one cannot be held morally responsible for these things
2. One cannot later accede true moral responsibility for the way one is by trying to change the way one already is as a result of heredity and previous experience, because:

3. The way one is moved to try to change oneself and the degree of one's success, are determined by how one already is as a result of heredity and previous experience. Furthermore:
4. Any further changes that one can bring about in – 3. Above – will be determined, via these initial changes, by heredity and previous experience.⁸⁶

The way that the younger Strawson's argument works is by a strict application of the law of entailment. The 'way one is' at birth is wholly given by heredity and experience. Common sense dictates that one who is without responsibility for the way one is cannot be held responsible. Clearly, we all know that a child is not responsible for his own circumstances. This common sense starting point gives rise to the later, counter-intuitive conclusion that adults are not responsible for how they are either. Strawson's argument works because it excludes the possibility of the emergence of one thing out of another, that is the emergence of adult responsibility out of childish irresponsibility. The one cannot entail the other, because they are so different. But one could just as easily put the argument the other way around. Since we know commonsensically that adults are responsible, and we exclude the possibility of the emergence of a distinctive factor out of given conditions, then we must assume that infants are responsible for how they are. If one rebel's against this absurd conclusion, it is no less absurd than the one that denies the responsibility of adults. (Indeed, in other ages and societies, the responsibility of infants and even animals has been taken seriously – but I do not mean to advance that case here). Strawson's conclusion is faulty not because of its premise, but because of its method, which excludes the possibility of the emergence of subjectivity, in the process of education and encouragement that is growing up. How, he is asking, can one be taught to think for oneself? It is an absurdity to formal logic, but not to a logic of development.

More interesting, perhaps is what the younger Strawson's rejection of individual autonomy tells us about the fragility of methodological individualism. With this negative assessment, the methodological individualism of Cold War ideology turns into its evil twin, Soviet-style determinism. Strawson's approach is characteristic of the empty contrast between free will and determinism in analytic philosophy. To the analytic philosophers free will and the determined were simply opposed. The philosophical answer was given by Hegel in his *Science of Logic* in which he describes the transformation of Substance into Subject in the Doctrine of the Concept. As popularised by Engels, freedom is the recognition of necessity, but it is also the leap from necessity. Like the diving board beneath your feet, necessity is determinate, but it is also the basis of self-determination, where one gives to oneself the law. Jump; don't jump: it's your call.

More than a Theory

In laying out the many varied theories of human interaction in so far as they touch upon the degradation of the Subject, the tendency is to minimise their differences from each other. The debates between schools of thought are passed over, perhaps to the detriment of their case. It is possible though, because of this common trend to minimise the role of the Subject. Throughout a variety of apparently contradictory outlooks we find an underlying unity in the increasing discomfort with the idea of the Subject. Engaging critically with these ideas, I have argued from the standpoint of the despised Subject, as the 'excluded Other' of these texts, if you will. The demotion of the free Subject is presented thus far as if it were an error, so to speak. But this is not quite how it is.

These different thinkers are not making a simple error. Their thoughts are not in a mismatch with the world. On the contrary, it is their sensitivity to the new conditions that drives them to demote human subjectivity in their thinking. They are sensitive to the way that in truth, the Subject is wanting, or degraded. In the engagement between the received ideas of the past, the intellectual systems handed down from previous generations, these theorists have become increasingly troubled by the widening gap between the theoretical Subject and the reality. Existing social and political thinking is ordered around the Subject. The Subject is the starting point of so many intellectual systems from Adam Smith's *Wealth of Nations* and Hegel's *Philosophy of Right* to Lenin's *What is to be Done?* or Sartre's *Being and Nothingness*. Finding this Subject still stumbling about in the realm of ideas, more contemporary thinkers were driven to wonder whether he had any correlate in the world, or if he lived up to the promise he offered. The theoretical Subject had been hollowed out, made ethereal like a ghost. The living Subject approximated less and less to the promise. Heideggerian Jean Greisch poses the question 'what are we to do when that double presupposition - a rational animal whose highest expression of value is freedom - becomes problematical...?'⁸⁷ Greisch is talking about the moral Subject, the autonomous individual who makes moral choices. But that Subject is in question, not just theoretically, but in fact.

There is a kind of elan to the critique of Subjectivity. It moves tentatively first, like a child testing out some new profanity. But finding that there is little resistance it rushes forward, pushing at an open door. It is as if someone worked up the courage to say 'The Subject has no clothes!' and suddenly his nakedness is revealed. Such sudden shifts encourage the criticism. The assault on the Subject takes on the character of a revolt, like storming the Winter Palace. Those that demur are reactionary old fuddy-duddies. Quite quickly the fugitive outlook of yesterday becomes the establishment viewpoint of

today. Postmodernism is now an intrinsic part of the syllabus throughout the humanities. Even the pope has gone pomo.

There is of course, a price to pay, and a heavy one. The theoretical degradation of the Subject is closer to reality than a naive reassertion of natural rights could be. But it is also an accomplice to the present. Whilst the first stirrings represented some considerable labour, groping towards something that was far from clear, the work today is just too easy. No sooner is a proposition made than it can be deconstructed. The question of whether the project of deconstruction is the right one is more and more difficult to ask. What is the degradation of the Subject in fact, and ought theory to be an accomplice to it? Thinking ought to pay attention to the world, but it does not necessarily have to celebrate the defeats of the human spirit. To take the argument further we will have to look more closely at the actuality of the degradation of the Subject. Not just as it is reworked in thought, but as it is lived.

Footnotes

¹ Office of National Statistics, *Britain 2000: Official Yearbook of the United Kingdom*, 1999; Robert Worcester and Roger Mortimer, *Explaining Labour's Landslide*, Politico's 1999.

² A representative of the liberal outlook of the eighteenth century Immanuel Kant writes that the principle of rights is to 'be a person and respect others as persons' (quoted in Avineri, Hegel's *Theory of the Modern State*, Cambridge: University Press, 1972, p137) or it is 'the equality of each member with every other as a Subject'

³ 'It is not from the benevolence of the butcher, the brewer or the baker that we expect our dinner, but from their regard to their own interest.' Adam Smith, *The Wealth of Nations*, Penguin, 1987, P119

⁴ 'Whoever refuses to obey the general will shall be constrained to do so by the whole body, which means nothing other than that he shall be forced to be free', JJ Rousseau, *The Social Contract*, Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1972, p64. Rousseau's forceful mode of expression alarms more individualistically minded readers, but he only means that if you beat up old ladies you will go to prison, for your own good, as much as anyone else's.

⁵ See Hillel Ticktin, *Origins of the Crisis in the USSR: Essays on the Political Economy of a Disintegrating System*, ME Sharpe: Armonk, 1992

⁶ A British National Party slogan of the late 1980s.

⁷ Francis Bacon wrote that 'building in the human understanding a true model of the world ... a thing which cannot be done without a very diligent dissection and anatomy of the world.' *The New Organon*, New York: Macmillan, 1986, Aphorism CXXIV, p113

⁸ See The Constitution of the United States of America, Article One, 'Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof'.

⁹ Immanuel Kant 'Nothing is required for this enlightenment, however except freedom; and the freedom in question is the least harmful of all, namely, the freedom to reason publicly in all matters.' 'What is Enlightenment' in *Perpetual Peace and Other Essays*, Indiana: Hackett, 1983, p 42

¹⁰ 'The Inhabitants shall have the right of free association and assemblance', Constitution of the Kingdom of the Netherlands, in Baron Asbeck (ed) *The Universal Declaration of Human Rights And its Predecessors* (1679-1948). Leiden: EJ Brill, 1949.

¹¹ See Habeas Corpus Act, 1679 (Great Britain) 'An act for the better securing the liberty of the subject, and for the prevention of imprisonments beyond the seas' in Baron Asbeck (ed) *The Universal Declaration of Human Rights And its Predecessors* (1679-1948). Leiden: EJ Brill, 1949.

¹² '1. That all men are by nature equally free and independent, and have certain inherent rights, or which, when they enter into a state of society, they cannot, by any compact, deprive or divest their posterity; namely, the enjoyment of life and liberty, with the means of acquiring and possessing property, and pursuing and obtaining happiness and safety.' Bill of Rights (Virginia) in Baron Asbeck (ed) *The Universal Declaration of Human Rights And its Predecessors* (1679-1948). Leiden: EJ Brill, 1949.

¹³ See 'Two Concepts of Liberty' in *Four Essays on Liberty*, Oxford, 1969

¹⁴ See CB Macpherson, *Democratic Theory: Essays in Retrieval*, Oxford: University Press, 1983

¹⁵ *The Information*, London: Flamingo, 1995, p129,.

¹⁶ Semiotext(e), 1983, p39

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- ¹⁷ Cadava, *What Comes After the Subject?*
- ¹⁸ Slavoj Žižek, *The Ticklish Subject: The Absent Centre of Political Ontology*, London: Verso, 1999
- ¹⁹ *Reason and Faith*
- ²⁰ *The Postmodern Condition: A Report on Knowledge*, Manchester: University Press, 1989, pXXIV
- ²¹ *The Postmodern Condition*, pXXIV
- ²² *Intellectual Impostures*, London: Profile, 1999.
- ²³ *The Undoing of Thought*, London: The Claridge Press, 1988, p116
- ²⁴ Jacques Derrida indicates the intrinsic nature of difference with his own concept of *différance* indicating not only differentiation, but also the deferment of the moment of closure that is definition, and hence the perpetual play of difference. 'Différance is the nonfull, nonsimple, structured and differentiating origin of differences.' *A Derrida Reader: Between the Blinds*, Hemel Hempstead: Harvester, 1991, p64
- ²⁵ *A Derrida Reader*, p65. My thanks to Kenan Malik for pointing this passage out.
- ²⁶ *A Derrida Reader*, p16
- ²⁷ *Of Grammatology*, Maryland: John Hopkins UP, 1997, p16
- ²⁸ *Of Spirit: Heidegger and the Question*, Chicago: University Press, 1991, p40
- ²⁹ Quoted in Luc Ferry and Alain Renault *Heidegger and Modernity*, Chicago: University Press, 1990 p2. I have missed out a second parenthesis, a sideswipe at Stalinism.
- ³⁰ Michel Foucault, *The Order of Things: The Archeology of the Human Sciences*, London: Tavistock, 1986, p 387. The striking image is drawn perhaps from this fragment of Herakleitos: 'History is a child building a sandcastle by the sea, and that child is the whole majesty of man's power in the world.' *Herakleitos and Diogenes*, trans., Guy Davenport, San Francisco: Grey Fox Press, 1979
- ³¹ Michel Foucault, *The Order of Things*, p344
- ³² Michel Foucault, *The Order of Things*, p345
- ³³ GWF Hegel, *Natural Law: The Scientific Ways of Treating Natural Law, Its place in Moral Philosophy, and its relation to the Positive Sciences of Law*, Pennsylvania: University Press, 1975.
- ³⁴ Karl Marx, Tenth thesis on Feuerbach, *Early Writings*, Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1984, p423
- ³⁵ CB Macpherson, *The Political Theory of Possessive Individualism: Hobbes to Locke*, Oxford: University Press, 1964, p197
- ³⁶ Of course, the coalescence of Hegelians, Marxists and poststructuralists by no means exhausts all possible views about the existence or otherwise of the natural individual. An echo of the eighteenth-century theory of natural right persists in some sociobiological theories, as well as in the free market theoreticians who follow Frederick Hayek and Karl Popper. But, as we shall see in Chapter 5, even these defenders of individualism offer only an anaemic and truncated support for the Subject. A greater sense of the contingency of social arrangements is forcing the pace of the historical relativisation of the Subject.
- ³⁷ 'It is in fact in the life of a people or nation that the Notion of self-conscious Reason's actualisation ... that the Notion has its complete reality.' *The Phenomenology of Spirit*, Oxford: University Press, 1977, p212
- ³⁸ with Engels, *Communist Manifesto*, Peking: Foreign Language Press, 1977, p46, 47.
- ³⁹ Georg Lukacs, Reification and the Consciousness of the Proletariat', *History and Class Consciousness*, London, Merlin, 1983.
- ⁴⁰ Jean Baudrillard *The Mirror of Production*, St Louis: Telos Press, 1975, p47
- ⁴¹ Jean Baudrillard *The Mirror of Production*, p67
- ⁴² Nietzsche, *Genealogy of Morals*, New York: Vintage, 1989, p45
- ⁴³ *Being and Time*, Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1990, p44
- ⁴⁴ *Being and Time*, p44
- ⁴⁵ Richard Rorty, quoted in *Questioning Ethics: Contemporary Debates in Philosophy*, Edited by Richard Kearney and Mark Dooley, London Routledge, 1999 p152
- ⁴⁶ Richard Rorty, *Essays on Heidegger and Others: Philosophical Papers, vol. II*, Cambridge University Press, 1991, p197.
- ⁴⁷ Richard Rorty, *Objectivity, Relativism and Truth: Philosophical Papers, vol. I*, Cambridge University Press, 1991, p196.
- ⁴⁸ quoted in *Questioning Ethics: Contemporary Debates in Philosophy*, Edited by Richard Kearney p158
- ⁴⁹ Richard Rorty, *Objectivity, Relativism and Truth*, p198-9.
- ⁵⁰ Richard Rorty, *Objectivity, Relativism and Truth*, p199.
- ⁵¹ Cornelius Castoriadis, 'The State of the Subject Today', in *World in Fragments: Writings on Politics, Society, Psychoanalysis and the Imagination*, Stanford: University Press, 1997, p 168
- ⁵² Cornelius Castoriadis, 'The State of the Subject Today', in *World in Fragments*, p 169.
- ⁵³ Cambridge: Polity, 1991, p5
- ⁵⁴ J-F Lyotard, *Political Writings*, London: University College, 1993, p122-3
- ⁵⁵ J-F Lyotard, 'The Wall the Gulf and the Sun', *Political Writings*, p 122-3
- ⁵⁶ 'Posthuman', Lyrics: Manson / Music: Ramirez, Gacy
- ⁵⁷ Much of this imagery was developed in William Gibson's novel *Neuromancer*.

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- ⁵⁸ In Charles Lemert (ed), *Social Theory: The Multicultural and Classical Readings*, Boulder: Westview Press, 1993, p599
- ⁵⁹ In Charles Lemert (ed), *Social Theory*, p598-9
- ⁶⁰ See Karl Marx, 'Theses on Feuerbach', in *Early Writings*, Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1978
- ⁶¹ London *Guardian*, March 20, 2000
- ⁶² Chris Gilligan, unpublished paper, Department of Politics and Contemporary History, University of Salford, 1999. I have benefited from discussions with Chris in the preparation of this section.
- ⁶³ Erik Erikson, *Childhood and Society*, New York: WW Norton, 1963
- ⁶⁴ Erving Goffman, *The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life*, Anchor, 1956
- ⁶⁵ See John D'Emilio and Estelle B. Freedman, *Intimate Matters: A History of Sexuality in America*, Chicago: University Press, 1998, p324
- ⁶⁶ See Stuart Hall and Tony Jefferson, *Resistance through Rituals*, London: Hutchinson, 1976.
- ⁶⁷ Juliet Mitchell, *Woman's Estate*, London: Pelican, 1971, p33
- ⁶⁸ Martin Heidegger, *An Introduction to Metaphysics*, Yale University Press, 1989
- ⁶⁹ Judith Butler, *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity*, London: Routledge, 1990, p142
- ⁷⁰ Stuart Hall, 'The Question of Cultural Identity', in Hall, Held and McGrew (eds), *Modernity and its Futures*, Cambridge: Polity, 1992, pp276-7
- ⁷¹ Stuart Hall, 'The Question of Cultural Identity', in *Modernity and its Futures*, p277
- ⁷² *Herakleitos and Diogenes*, San Francisco: Grey Fox Press, 1979, ed. Guy Davenport, p 23
- ⁷³ Judith Butler, *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity*, London: Routledge, 1990, p145
- ⁷⁴ Judith Butler, *Gender Trouble*, p147
- ⁷⁵ Judith Butler, *Gender Trouble*, p147
- ⁷⁶ Judith Butler, *Gender Trouble*, p145
- ⁷⁷ See Robin Blackburn, 'Fin De Sciecle Socialism After the Crash', *New Left Review* 185 (1991)
- ⁷⁸ Karl Popper, *The Poverty of Historicism*, London: Routledge, 1963, p 158
- ⁷⁹ FA Hayek, *New Studies in Philosophy, Politics, Economics, and the History of Ideas*, London: Routledge, 1990, p223
- ⁸⁰ 'I have belatedly come to agree with Josef Schumpeter who 30 years ago argued that there was an irreconcilable conflict between democracy and capitalism', *New Studies*, p107
- ⁸¹ *Fatal Conceit: The Errors of Socialism*, London: Routledge, 1990, p21. Defenders of Hayek's reputation protest that the book owed more to its editor, WW Bartley III, than the by then elderly economist.
- ⁸² *Fatal Conceit*, p75
- ⁸³ *Fatal Conceit*, p63
- ⁸⁴ PF Strawson, *Individuals*, p 99
- ⁸⁵ Richard Rorty, *Philosophy and the Mirror of Nature*, Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1986
- ⁸⁶ Galen Strawson, 'The impossibility of Moral Responsibility', *Philosophical Studies* 75, p 7
- ⁸⁷ *Questioning Ethics*, edited by Richard Kearney and Mark Dooley, p 48

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